
If you believe you are eligible to vote and encounter difficulty registering, please contact the Elections Division of the Texas Secretary of State:

Elections Division
Secretary of State
P.O. Box 12060
Austin, TX 78711-2060
(800)-252-VOTE (toll-free)
(512) 463-5650 (voice)
(512) 475-2811 (fax)
www.sos.state.tx.us/elections

If the Elections Division is unable to help you, or to report a problem, contact:

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Voting Section, Rm. 7254 - NWB
Washington, D.C. 20530
(202) 307-2767 (voice)
(800) 253-3931 (toll-free)
(202) 307-3961 (fax)
www.usdoj.gov/crt

This pamphlet is provided for informational purposes only, as an aid to further inquiry. The laws in many states are revised frequently, and may have changed since this pamphlet was issued. It is your responsibility to determine whether you are lawfully eligible to vote, and criminal penalties can result from voting when ineligible or making false statements on a registration form.

Issued December, 2000

U.S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division



Restoring Your Right to Vote



The right to vote is an important civil right in a democracy as well as a civic responsibility, and yet many persons who have been convicted of a crime do not know whether they are eligible to vote. For both federal and state elections, the right to vote is controlled by the law of the state in which you live. Some states restrict the right to vote for persons who have been convicted of a crime. This pamphlet is intended to help you determine whether you are eligible to vote in the state in which you live, and if so, what steps you must take to be permitted to vote.

What law governs whether my felony conviction limits my right to vote?

The impact of a criminal conviction on the right to vote varies widely from state to state. Whether you can vote after being convicted of a crime is determined by the state in which you live, not the state in which you were convicted.

Can I vote while I'm incarcerated in Texas?

If you are a resident of Texas, you may not vote while you are incarcerated as a result of a felony conviction. If you are a resident of another state who is temporarily incarcerated in Texas, you may be able to vote by absentee ballot in your home state. You need to consult the law of your home state regarding both criminal convictions and absentee ballots to see if this is a possibility.

I have been released from incarceration. How do I restore my right to vote?

In Texas, the right to vote is restored when a person is fully discharged from his or her sentence. This includes any term of parole, probation or supervision. Convicted persons may also regain their voting rights if they have been granted a gubernatorial pardon or release from the resulting disability to vote.

How do I obtain a pardon?

You can obtain a pardon by requesting an application from the Executive Clemency Office. Return the completed application along with requested documents to the Executive Clemency Office. The Board of Pardons and Paroles would then vote for granting or denying a pardon. Upon receiving a written signed recommendation from the Board, the Governor decides whether to grant or deny the pardon. Generally, the entire process takes about a year.

What if my conviction was for a federal crime?

Texas applies the same rules whether you were convicted of a federal or state crime.

If you were convicted of a federal crime, your right to vote is restored once you have been fully discharged from the terms of your sentence or once you have received a pardon. Individuals convicted of a federal crime may not apply for a pardon for the purpose of restoring the right to vote unless they have completed the sentence for the federal offense, the conviction occurred three or more years before the date of application, and the individual has not been convicted at any other time of any offense under the laws of Texas, another state, or the United States.

What if I was convicted in another state?

The same rules apply for Texas voters even if the conviction occurred in another state.

What happens if I move to another state?

If you move to another state, your right to vote will be controlled by the laws of that state.

What are Texas's other voter registration requirements?

To vote in Texas, you must be

- a U.S. citizen
- a resident of the county
- at least 18 years of age on election day
- not declared mentally disabled by a court of law

Once you register to vote you will continue to be a registered voter for as long as you remain at the same address. You will automatically receive a new voter registration certificate every two years. When you get your certificate, please review the information for accuracy. If any of the information is incorrect, notify the person that handles your local voter registration duties with your changes. If you move within the state, you must re-register.

When do I need to register to vote?

Registration is available year-round in Texas. There is, however, a 30-day processing period before your registration becomes effective.

Where do I go to register?

An application to register is available at many places in Texas, including:

- county offices
- libraries
- The Department of Public Safety
- local county court house

You can also register to vote by mail in Texas. Both the application and the postage are paid for by the State of Texas. Registration may also be available at other state service agencies. Contact the Voter Registrar office near you to find out which service agencies provide voter registration.